TOPIC: India's Food Policy from the Green Revolution to the National Food Security Bill: A Comparative Study on Security and Insecurity in Select Indian States COMMENCEMENT- MAY, 2016

SYNOPSIS

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The idea of food security has undergone a process of evolution, advancement, proliferation, and diversification since the inaugural of World Food Conference in 1974. While there exist about 200 distinct interpretations of the concept, the fundamental nature of all these interpretations is comparable. A widely accepted and practical definition of food security is that it encompasses the condition where every individual, without exception, have the means to get an adequate, uncontaminated, and nourishing food supply that fulfils their dietary requirements and personal food preferences, so enabling them to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. The concept of food security encompasses four dimensions: availability, accessibility, utilisation, and vulnerability. The interplay between these dimensions determines the level of food security in a country, as well as the adequacy, consistency, and safety of food consumption at the household and individual levels. Significant advancements have been achieved in mitigating food insecurity during the past four decades from the inception of the inaugural World Conference in 1974. However, India still has significant challenges in ensuring food security at both the national and household levels. This is crucial not just for the well-being of its population, but also for sustaining political stability. In order to enhance food security, the Government of India has implemented several initiatives, such as making concentrated efforts to boost foodgrain production, intervening in the grain markets, establishing a public distribution system, and maintaining inventories of important foodgrains. The imminent enactment of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) aims to guarantee universal economic and social entitlement to sufficient food and a dignified standard of living for all individuals in the nation, consistently. Nevertheless, despite several attempts and policies, the issues of food and nutritional security persist in India. India harbours a significant portion, around one-third, of the global population of undernourished children. Nearly half of all Indian children suffer from stunted growth, and 40 percent are underweight. Additionally, one-third of Indian women

are also underweight. Micro-nutrient deficits are widespread and prevalent in all areas (Joshi et al., 2011).

India has faced numerous food-related problems from 1968 to 2013. Some of the significant issues are:

1. Food scarcity: In the late 1960s, India faced a severe food shortage due to low agricultural productivity and a rapidly growing population. This situation led to the Green Revolution, which aimed to increase agricultural productivity by using high-yielding varieties of crops, modern farming techniques, and increased use of fertilizers and irrigation.

2. Food price inflation: In the early 1970s, India faced a sudden rise in food prices due to the increase in the cost of inputs like fertilizers and seeds, transportation, and storage facilities. This led to widespread protests and riots in several parts of the country.

3. Malnutrition: Despite the Green Revolution, malnutrition remained a significant problem in India. A large section of the population, especially in rural areas, did not have access to a balanced and nutritious diet, leading to various health problems.

4. Food distribution: In the 1980s, India faced challenges in distributing food to the needy population, especially in remote areas. The Public Distribution System (PDS) was introduced to provide food at subsidized rates, but it faced many operational challenges like leakages and inefficiencies.

5. Food safety: In the 1990s, food safety became a significant concern in India due to the widespread use of pesticides and chemicals in farming. There were instances of food adulteration and contamination, leading to health hazards.

6. Genetically modified crops: In the early 2000s, India faced debates and controversies over the introduction of genetically modified crops. While some experts saw it as a solution to increase agricultural productivity, others raised concerns over its safety and long-term effects.

7. Food waste: In recent years, food waste has become a significant problem in India, with a

considerable amount of food being wasted at various stages of production, storage, and distribution. This wastage has adverse environmental and economic impacts.

Overall, India has made significant progress in improving its food-related challenges over the years, but many problems still persist.

Government policies 1968-2013 to combat food crisis:

The Indian government implemented several policies from 1968 to 2013 to combat the food crisis in the country. Some of the notable policies are:

1. Green Revolution (1960s-1970s): The government launched the Green Revolution to increase agricultural productivity and food production by promoting the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, modern farming techniques, and increased use of fertilizers and irrigation.
2. Public Distribution System (PDS) (1980s): The PDS was introduced to provide subsidized food to the poor and vulnerable population. It aimed to ensure that essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, and kerosene were available to all at affordable prices.
3. Food Corporation of India (FCI) (1960s): The FCI was established to ensure a reliable supply of food grains at fair prices to consumers, to support the food security of the country.
4. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) (2005): The NREGA aimed to provide employment opportunities to rural people and address issues related to poverty and food insecurity.
5. Mid-day Meal Scheme (1995): The Mid-day Meal Scheme aimed to provide free meals to school children, ensuring that they receive adequate nutrition while attending school.
6. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) (2007): The RKVY aimed to provide financial support to states to promote agricultural growth, improve productivity, and address issues related to food security
7. National Food Security Act (NFSA) (2013): The NFSA aimed to provide subsidized food grains to 67% of the population, ensuring that no one goes hungry in the country.

Overall, the Indian government has implemented several policies to combat the food crisis over the years. These policies have had a significant impact in addressing the food-related

challenges faced by the country, but there is still a long way to go in ensuring food security for all.

Focus and Objectives:

The focus of food security in India is to ensure that all people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times. The primary objective is to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and ensure that people can live a healthy life. To achieve food security, the government of India has implemented several policies and programs, including the National Food Security Act, the Public Distribution System, and the Mid-day Meal Scheme. These policies aim to provide food grains, cooking fuel, and other essential items at subsidized prices to vulnerable populations, such as the poor, women, and children. However, food insecurity continues to be a significant problem in India, with millions of people still facing hunger and malnutrition. The government's focus on food insecurity is to address the root causes of food insecurity and eliminate it entirely. The primary objective of addressing food insecurity is to ensure that all individuals have the ability to access food and the resources to produce food. To achieve this objective, the government has implemented several policies and programs, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. These policies aim to provide employment opportunities, agricultural insurance, and financial support to farmers to promote agricultural growth and address issues related to food insecurity. In summary, the focus of food security in India is to ensure that all people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, while the focus of food insecurity is to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition and ensure that all individuals have the ability to access food and the resources to produce food.

Introduction to India's Food Policy

India's food policy has undergone significant transformations over the years, driven by the need to ensure food security and improve nutrition intake for its population (Law et al., 2019). Improving food security and nutrition intake remains a key policy concern in developing countries and India is no exception. The government has implemented various public policy measures to address these concerns, such as the National Food Security Act and the Public Distribution System. The overall goal of India's food policy is to improve access to sufficient

and nutritious food for all its citizens, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. For example, the government has implemented the Public Distribution System, which provides subsidized rice or wheat to poor households. Additionally, the government has focused on increasing agricultural productivity and sustainability to ensure long-term food security (Mittal et al., 2018). As part of these efforts, the National Food Security Act was passed in 2013, which aims to comprehensively address food security issues in the country by providing legal entitlements to subsidized food grains for a large section of the population. The Act includes various intervention measures to improve food accessibility, availability, and affordability for individuals across the country. The Indian government has taken a multi-faceted approach to address food security and nutrition issues in the country. The government has implemented various programs and schemes, such as the Public Distribution System, the Midday Meal Scheme, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act Scheme, to prioritize food security and ensure access to adequate and diverse food (Aurino et al., 2019). These programs aim to provide subsidized food grains, meals for school children, and employment opportunities to ensure that individuals have sustained access to nutritious food. Through these initiatives, the government aims to tackle not only the problem of food availability but also the issue of equitable distribution. The Indian government has recognized the importance of ensuring food security and improving nutrition intake for its population (Law et al., 2019). The government has implemented various public policy measures, such as the National Food Security Act and the Public Distribution System to address these concerns. These efforts and policies demonstrate the government's commitment to improving food security and nutrition intake in India. India’s food policy has indeed been a multi-faceted approach aimed at addressing the complex issues of food security and nutrition. The Public Distribution System has been a cornerstone of the government's efforts, providing subsidized rice or wheat to poor households and ensuring that the most vulnerable populations have access to essential food supplies. Additionally, the National Food Security Act of 2013 has played a pivotal role in legally entitling subsidized food grains to a large section of the population, further enhancing the accessibility, availability, and affordability of food across the country.

In addition to these key interventions, the government’s focus on increasing agricultural productivity and sustainability underscores its commitment to ensuring long-term food security. By implementing various programs and schemes such as the Midday Meal Scheme and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the government has not

only targeted food availability but has also prioritized equitable distribution and access to diverse and nutritious food.

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the importance of improving nutrition intake is evident in the comprehensive nature of the policy measures that have been put in place. These efforts reflect the government's dedication to not only addressing immediate food security concerns but also to laying the groundwork for sustained access to nutritious food for all citizens, particularly the most marginalized and disadvantaged.

The complexity and multifaceted nature of India's food policy highlight the government's recognition of the interconnected challenges of food security and nutrition. By implementing a range of measures and interventions, India's food policy is strategically designed to address these challenges in a comprehensive and integrated manner, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the well-being of its population. The Indian government has implemented a range of policies and interventions to address the complex issues of food security and nutrition in the country (Gujral et al., 2019).

Comparative Analysis of Food Security: Madhya Pradesh vs Punjab

Madhya Pradesh and Punjab are two states in India that have experienced different levels of success in achieving food security. Madhya Pradesh has made significant strides in improving food security through various initiatives. These initiatives include the implementation of the Public Distribution Scheme, Midday-Meal Scheme, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act Scheme (Aurino et al., 2019). These programs have helped to ensure access to food for the population of Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand, Punjab, despite being known as the "granary of India" due to its high agricultural productivity, still faces challenges in achieving food security. These challenges stem from the inequitable distribution of food and the lack of an enabling environment for converting food into adequate nutrition. Overall, while both states have implemented food security programs, Madhya Pradesh has been more successful in ensuring access to food for its population. The study recommends that India needs to strengthen food entitlements for its vulnerable population through employment guarantee programs and midday meals programs (Nour & Abdalla, 2021). In conclusion, India's food policy has made progress in improving access to food and addressing food shortages, but there are still challenges to be addressed, particularly in terms of ensuring equitable distribution and

improving nutrition outcomes (Banik, 2016). India's food policy has prioritized the production, distribution, and consumption of diverse nutrient-rich foods to improve nutrition outcomes.

Food Security vs Insecurity in Select Indian States

India has implemented various food security programs, such as the Public Distribution System and the Midday-Meal Scheme, to address the issue of food security and improve access to nutritious meals. These programs have had different outcomes in different states, with Madhya Pradesh experiencing significant improvements in nutrition outcomes and equitable distribution of food, while Punjab has faced challenges related to wastage and leakage from the system. Despite the implementation of food security programs, challenges still persist in ensuring access to adequate and diverse food for all segments of the population in India (Aurino et al., 2019). The National Food Security Act, implemented in 2013, has been an important step towards ensuring food security for the vulnerable population in India (Kozicka et al., 2016). However, there are concerns about the effectiveness of these programs and the need for a more enabling environment to convert food into adequate nutrition. Overall, the prioritization of food security in India's policy agenda is evident through programs like the Public Distribution Scheme, the Midday-Meal Scheme, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act Scheme (Aurino et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Indian Food Policy

Based on the comparative study of food security in Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, it is clear that there are both positive and negative impacts of the Green Revolution on Indian agriculture and food security. While the Green Revolution has increased production and self-sufficiency in major food grains, it has also led to environmental degradation, health risks, and the marginalization of small farmers (Purushothaman et al., 2012). Therefore, it is essential for Indian food policy to address these challenges and develop inclusive and sustainable agricultural strategies. These strategies could include promoting organic and sustainable farming practices, investing in rural infrastructure and agricultural research, providing access to credit for small farmers, and ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of resources and benefits in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, there is a need to diversify crops and promote agroecological approaches to reduce the reliance on chemical inputs and monocultures. Additionally, the government should prioritize the needs and rights of small farmers by implementing policies that protect their interests and provide them with necessary support such

as access to markets, extension services, and social safety nets. Overall, it is crucial for India to transition towards a more inclusive and sustainable agricultural system that not only increases food production but also protects the environment, promotes health, and uplifts the livelihoods of all farmers, especially smallholders. Therefore, it is recommended that the Indian government reassess its current agricultural policies and invest in sustainable farming practices, rural infrastructure, and agricultural research to mitigate the negative impacts of the Green Revolution and ensure long-term food security and sustainability. Additionally, there should be a focus on promoting agroecological approaches and diversification of crops to reduce the reliance on chemical inputs and monocultures and promote biodiversity in agricultural systems. In conclusion, the Indian food policy should prioritize inclusive and sustainable agricultural strategies that address the negative impacts of the Green Revolution while promoting food security and environmental sustainability.

The Future of Food Security in India: Insights from the Comparative Study

In conclusion, the future of food security in India lies in implementing inclusive and sustainable agricultural strategies that address the negative impacts of the Green Revolution. These strategies should promote organic and sustainable farming practices, diversify crops, invest in rural infrastructure and agricultural research, provide access to credit for small farmers, ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources and benefits in the agricultural sector, prioritize the needs and rights of small farmers, promote agroecological approaches, and protect the environment. This will require a comprehensive reassessment of current agricultural policies and significant investment from the government. Furthermore, the government should ensure that these policies align with the goals of reducing inequalities, promoting economic growth, and addressing climate variability. The implementation of these sustainable agricultural strategies will not only ensure long-term food security but also contribute to the reduction of negative environmental impacts. The future of food security in India lies in adopting sustainable agricultural practices that address the negative impacts of the Green Revolution while ensuring inclusive growth and reducing inequalities. These practices should include promoting agroecology, diversifying crops, investing in rural infrastructure and agricultural research, providing access to credit for small farmers, and ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of resources in the agricultural sector (Rintoul, 2016).

In conclusion, the future of food security in India hinges on the revaluation and reshaping of agricultural practices. It calls for concerted efforts to promote agroecology, diversify crops,

invest in rural infrastructure, and ensure equitable distribution of resources in the agricultural sector. Embracing these sustainable agricultural strategies will not only bolster food security but also pave the way for a more environmentally conscious and inclusive agricultural landscape in India.

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